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AUTHOR Brown, Marilyn K.
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ABSTRACT

The process of evaluating college academic-support units is described, and the experience of the University of Maryland (College Park) with such a program is discussed. A review of the literature discusses six models: the goal-attainment model, the systems model, the process model, the multiple-constituency approach, the Goodman and Pennings framework of organizational effectiveness, and Seashore's framework for an integrated model of organizational effectiveness. The development of a framework for the review of academic-support units is discussed in relation to the following: purpose of evaluation, level of analysis, constituents to be included, domains of activity to be considered, time frame, type of data utilized, and referents. Thirteen steps in conducting an evaluation are identified, beginning with the formation of a self-study committee and consideration of external reviewers through the development of implementation plans based on the evaluation. Shortcomings and benefits of the review are discussed. The implementation process at the University of Maryland is described, including preliminary results and the role of the institutional research office. Two appendices provide guiding principles for the review of academic-support units and a list of evaluation questions. Contains 32 references. (KM)

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Developing and Implementing a Process for the Review of Nonacademic Units

Presented by:

Marilyn K. Brown

Office of Institutional Studies
The University of Maryland College Park

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This paper was presented at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona, May 15-18, 1988. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Teresa Karolewski
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Developing and Implementing a Process for the Review of Nonacademic Units

Introduction

"Evaluation" and "assessment" are certainly not uncommon words in the vocabulary of higher education. This familiarity with evaluation is in large part the result of the need of institutions of higher education to be accountable. Those colleges and universities that are state supported are accountable to the public through state officials -- usually a board which oversees higher education in their state. Private institutions are no less accountable to their benefactors. All institutions have a responsibility to their students and their students' parents, if they're paying the bills. The Federal government holds institutions accountable if they receive Federal research grants or student-aid funds.

Most frequently the emphasis of accountability, and thus evaluation, is on the quality of the instructional program. How well are academic programs performing their functions of instruction, research, and service? Today many, if not most, institutions of higher education systematically assess their academic programs (Barak, 1982).

This is not the case with units that support the instructional enterprise, however. Academic-support units usually are not subjected to formal evaluation. Operations such as admissions, registration, computing, purchasing, personnel, resident life, and institutional research, to name a few -- all so important to the accomplishment of a college's goals -- are usually "left alone" unless someone in authority perceives a serious problem. Internal, and where appropriate, state auditors might review a nonacademic unit's operations to be certain the unit is conforming to institutional and/or state regulations and policies, but rarely does anyone formally assess the

unit's performance in relation to its goals and the expectations of those the unit serves.

To correct this oversight, the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) is undertaking a formal systematic program of evaluation of nonacademic units. The impetus for such evaluation comes from a Campus Senate proposition adopted 17 years ago. Proposition XII of the "Proposals on Academic Reorganization to the College Park Senate of the University of Maryland" (August 1971) called for the development of recommendations for the regular review of academic and administrative units. In 1973, the Campus Senate approved "Procedures for the Review of the Performance of the Academic Units and Their Administrators on the College Park Campus of the University of Maryland." Since then, these procedures have been refined and implemented. Indeed, the academic unit-review process is well established at UMCP.

The Senate never acted on the development of guidelines for the evaluation of nonacademic units. Determined "to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of campus administration," Chancellor John B. Slaughter, in his statement of "Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives," called for the development of "...policies and procedures in each campus division for conducting periodic evaluations of all administrative units" (Making a Difference: Goals, Objectives and Initiatives, p. 5).

The effort to implement the systematic review of nonacademic units at UMCP began early in 1986 with the exploration of activities that might be under way in the area of evaluation at other major universities. A survey of public members of the Association of American Universities revealed that most universities conduct regular reviews of their academic units and many formally evaluate administrators. Only the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has established a formal process for the evaluation of nonacademic units. The Illinois Board of Higher Education has mandated that such evaluation occur. A

description of the process in place at the University of Illinois can be found in the Winter, 1987 edition of New Directions for Institutional Research (Wilson, 1987).

In Spring 1986, UMCP's Chancellor appointed the Academic-Support Unit Review Guidelines Committee (henceforth referred to as the Committee) comprising representatives of the four vice chancellors, chaired by the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, with staff support provided by the Director of Institutional Studies. The Committee was charged with developing a systematic process which would address the question of how effectively campus nonacademic units are operating, including an assessment of the extent to which they are contributing to the achievement of the goals, objectives, and initiatives established for the Campus.

The literature was reviewed to find a model for assessing the effectiveness of organizational subunits. While the literature is rich with ideas, theorists do not agree on what organizational effectiveness means or how to measure it (Cameron and Whetten, 1983). In fact many theorists themselves agree with John P. Campbell (1977) when he says that "the meaning of organizational effectiveness is not a truth that is buried somewhere waiting to be discovered if only our concept and data collection methods were good enough" (p. 15). Goodman and Pennings (1977) elaborate on the "preliminary state" of the theoretical literature on organizational effectiveness. They point out that there is no agreed-upon definition of organizational effectiveness; there are differing views of the nature of organizations, which in one way or another determine the conceptual definition of effectiveness; knowledge about the construct validity of organizational effectiveness is lacking; the domain of effectiveness has not been specified; there has not been an examination of the effect of using different time periods in assessing organizational effectiveness; defining the role of

constituencies has not been adequately addressed; the structure of the determinants of organizational effectiveness have not been theoretically determined nor is there agreement on how to distinguish between determinants and components of effectiveness.

Literature Review

The literature on organizational effectiveness is dominated by the discussion of two primary models--the goal model and the systems model. There are several variations of each of these, but elements of these two primary models appear in most other models or frameworks. It is appropriate, then, to begin with the discussion of these two models and proceed to the other models that have been developed more recently.

1. The goal-attainment model is based on Weber's concept of bureaucracy. This model views organizations as rational and goal setting. Effectiveness is measured using a set of criteria which determine how well the goals are being achieved (Cameron, 1980 and Campbell, 1977).

There are several definitions of goals that must be considered. Simon (1964) discusses goals in terms of the individual and defines goals as "value premises that can serve as inputs to decisions" (p. 3). He couples his discussion of goals with a discussion of "motives" which he defines as the "cause...that lead individuals to select some goals rather than others as premises for their decisions" (p. 3).

Perrow (1961) discusses two categories of goals--official and operative. Official goals are those to be found in the organization's charter, mission statement, annual reports, and public statements. They are purposely vague and general. They ignore the many decisions that must be made concerning alternative ways of achieving these goals, the priority of multiple goals, and the many unofficial goals pursued by the organization.

Perrow (1961) uses "operative goals" to cover the aspects official goals ignore. Operative goals "designate the ends sought through the actual operating policies of the organization" (Perrow, p. 855). In a sense, operative goals are a means to achieving official goals. Operative goals also indicate the relative priority of diverse and conflicting ends such as employee morale, high productivity, or diversification.

The identification of goals, then, is not simple. If goals are multiple and not easily identified, measuring their achievement cannot be a simple task. Other criticisms of the goal-attainment model are raised by Georgiou (1973) who points out that the goal model doesn't reflect the interaction of the individual worker with the organization, and Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) who note that this model does not consider the relationship of the organization with the environment.

Hannan and Freeman (1977) point out several difficulties with the goal model: (1) there are multiple and often conflicting goals in organizations; (2) goals are frequently unspecified; (3) goals may be defined only with respect to individuals and their interests within the organization.

2. The systems model views organizations as open systems interacting with their environment. The systems-resource approach proposed by Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) defines effectiveness in terms of the organization's ability to bargain successfully in its environment for "scarce and valued resources." Such resources include capital, human energy, prestige, political influence, physical facilities and technology. The value of such resources is derived from their utility to the organization as it engages in its activities. Acquisition is one of three major activities to be considered in bargaining for resources. The other activities are the utilization of resources (including allocation and processing), and their exportation as outputs which aid further input.

Scott (1977) criticizes the systems resource approach because: (1) focusing only on inputs may have damaging effects on outputs, and (2) it assumes the only valuable aspects of the organization are those which aid further input acquisition. Molnar and Rogers (1976) claim the system resource model is not appropriate in considering the effectiveness of public nonprofit organizations.

Georgopoulas and Tennenbaum (1957) also offer a systems view of organizational effectiveness. They define organizational effectiveness as "the extent to which an organization as a social system, given certain resources and means, fulfills its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain upon its members" (Georgopoulas and Tennenbaum, p. 535). Criteria for effectiveness are: (1) organizational productivity, (2) organizational flexibility in adjusting to both internal change and changes in the environment, and (3) absence of strain or tension among organizational subgroups.

3. The process model "relies on internal organizational processes as the defining characteristic of effectiveness" (Cameron, 1978, p. 605). It views organizations as a series of procedures, routines, functions, and structures. It assumes that goals are set and met as a result of the effectiveness of various management processes such as planning, budgeting, and decision making (Cunningham, 1977).

Pfeffer (1977) discusses effectiveness as involving the study of several processes: (1) the process by which groups both within and outside the organization develop and articulate preferences; (2) the process by which the organization comes to perceive the various demands it confronts; and (3) the process by which actions and decisions are taken in this environment of frequently conflicting demands.

The model is criticized because of the difficulty of monitoring organizational processes (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975), the expense of gathering data on processes (Scott, 1977), and the process' focus on means to the neglect of ends (Campbell, 1977).

4. The multiple-constituency approach is one of the most recently proposed models of effectiveness. It is based on the premise that individuals involved with any given organization (constituencies) have different expectations. Effectiveness is defined as the degree to which each set of expectations is met (Connolly, Conlon, and Deutsch, 1980). Although Perrow (1961) doesn't explicitly describe a multiple-constituency approach, he says that operative goals "are tied more directly to group interests" (p. 856).

Scott (1977) also supports a multiple-constituency approach, although he doesn't give his model that name. In describing the different constituencies (rank-and-file participants, consumers or clients, regulators, stockholders) he says "we may expect all of these groups to employ special criteria in assessing OE" (p. 70). Pfeffer also implies a multiple-constituency approach in his process model.

The literature doesn't present criticism of the multiple-constituency approach. However, one might critique the model on the grounds that value judgments must be made about which constituencies are to be considered in the evaluation of effectiveness. When conflicts arise among constituencies, who will set priorities and on what bases?

5. The Goodman and Pennings framework of organizational effectiveness is an attempt to synthesize and extend the conceptualization of organizational effectiveness. Goodman and Pennings (1977) propose a definition based on the concepts of goals, constraints, and referents.

> Organizations are effective to the degree that relevant constraints can be satisfied and organizational results made to approximate or exceed a set of referents for multiple goals. Goals are desired end states. Constraints are conditions that need to be satisfied. Referents are the standards against which outcomes are evaluated (p. 10).

This framework combines the goal approach of Cyert and March (1963) and the systems approach of Katz and Kahn (1966), "and follows Thompson's (1967) strategy of combining the open systems notion of complex organizations with the assumption that organizations represent a political arena where different groups try to promote their interests" (Goodman and Pennings, 1977, p. 148). The framework emphasizes subunits and their interrelationships with their total environment. This environment "consists of the individuals, groups and organizations that provide resources for organizational input and that are recipients of organizational output" (Goodman and Pennings, 1977, p. 154).

6. Seashore's framework for an integrated model of organizational effectiveness extends Goodman and Pennings' framework "to produce a framework that will aid coherent thought and judicious action by those who are compelled by their leadership roles or their research tasks to choose a definition of effectiveness that suits their unique purposes" (Seashore, 1977, p. 55). This framework merges the "contemporary theories" of the natural systems model, the goal model, and the decision-process model. It takes into account the perspectives arising from the interests of: (1) groups at all levels of the organization hierarchy, (2) individual members of the organization, (3) persons and organizations outside of the focal organization, and (4) the general societal or public interest. The model implies that influential constituents will make judgments about effectiveness and that "action implications will follow" (Seashore, 1977, p. 66).

Development of a Framework for the Review of Academic-Support Units

After synthesizing the literature and establishing its own "Guiding Principles" (see Appendix A), the Committee decided reviews of nonacademic units should be conducted using a modified self-study approach. Self-study is a process familiar to members of the campus community. It is used in the accreditation review process and in the academic unit review process.

Utilization of a modified self-study concept requires the formation of a self-study committee to oversee the evaluation. This committee should comprise representatives of the several constituencies with an interest in the unit. Constituencies to be represented would include the dominant coalition (senior administrators), unit managers, unit staff, campus users of the unit's services, external suppliers or users, and the unit head (usually a director). This committee, appointed by the senior administrator in charge of the unit, in consultation with the unit director, would oversee the self study and prepare a report using the UMCP framework as a guide.

Upon completion of the self study, two or more external consultants would be brought to campus to perform an independent evaluation of the unit. Their report would be incorporated into the report of the self-study committee. The UMCP framework for the review of nonacademic units is based on the seven issues critical for a successful evaluation (Cameron and Whetten, 1983; Goodman and Pennings, 1980; and Steers, 1975).

Purpose of evaluation. Since significant resources in the form of both staff time and money will be invested in this evaluation process, it is important that the evaluations produce results that are useful to everyone involved, especially the senior administrator responsible for the unit and the director of the unit, but also the unit staff and other constituents as well. Therefore, the evaluation will be "utilization focused" (Patton, 1978).

Utilization-focused evaluation is, by its nature, formative, as opposed to summative evaluation. The primary purpose of the assessment of academic-support units is to collect information that can be used to improve and further develop the unit.

It is also important to recognize that evaluation "is partly a political process" (Patton, 1978, p. 49). Decision makers use evaluation results to reduce uncertainty, through the generation of information for prediction and control. Unit heads could utilize the evaluation process to influence constituencies and use the results of the evaluation to garner additional resources.

The stated purpose of this evaluation process is to assess the effectiveness of the units. More to the point, however, is the purpose of the evaluation as viewed by the senior administrator as well as the unit head. The first step in a utilization-focused evaluation is to have the self-study committee discuss the evaluation with these administrators and determine particular issues and/or problems they would like to have explored in the course of the review of the unit (Patton, 1978). The evaluation cannot be useful if it doesn't provide the specific information these administrators need to make decisions and improve the operation of the unit. The primary purpose of the evaluation then is to meet the requirements of administrators for information concerning the effectiveness of their unit.

Another purpose of evaluation in any organization is to improve the quality of the organization. This is particularly important in an institution of higher education that is striving to achieve a high level of excellence. If a university is to achieve academic excellence, its leaders must also be concerned with the performance and quality of the institution's nonacademic units (Keller, 1984). It is equally important for senior administrators, as well as the university's constituencies, to know if the resources being

expended on nonacademic support are being utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Level of analysis. The purpose of the evaluation process has determined that the academic-support unit is the level at which the evaluation will be conducted. Goodman and Pennings (1977) support assessment at this level. "It seems strategically advantageous to focus on subunits' characteristics, including their technological and human resources and the social structure and processes that they have developed" (p. 150).

Constituents to be included. The perspectives of all identifiable constituents of the unit should be considered in the evaluation. There are two ways of assuring that the perspective of all constituents are considered in a review. First, a representative of the constituency can serve as a member of the self-study committee. Secondly, constituents can be surveyed.

The UMCP framework strongly recommends that senior administrators (an assistant vice president, perhaps), subunit supervisors, and staff of the unit be represented on the committee. The director of the unit should be included as well. Without these constituents the evaluation is not a self study. Additionally, it is in the interest of the unit and the campus that the evaluation be perceived as a positive event and not a "witch hunt." It is normal for staff and supervisors of a unit to be apprehensive if their performance is being examined. Perhaps someone is "out to get them." These fears can be somewhat allayed by appointing one or more representatives of the supervisory and working staffs to the self-study committee. This is also a mechanism for providing the staff with insight into the perspectives of other constituents.

Users of the unit's services should also be represented. Some units have several distinct categories of users or "customers." For instance, the purchasing department in a university serves several kinds of academic

departments. Some rarely buy anything more than office supplies and an occasional piece of office equipment. There are departments with large research components whose purchases comprise very sophisticated equipment required for conducting specific research projects and/or for instruction. Finally, there are users such as physical plant who buy large quantities of building materials and supplies, heavy equipment, and motor vehicles. Each of these types of customers has different requirements which translate into different goals for the purchasing department. Somehow all of these users' perspectives must be considered in the review. It would be advisable to include at least one of the large-volume purchases on the self-study committee while utilizing the second method of recognizing constituent perspectives to consider the views of the less-frequent customers. In fact, a more complete picture of all customers' views would be obtained if all types of customers were surveyed (in addition to having large-volume users serve on the self-study committee).

Other constituencies whose perspectives are important in an evaluation are groups in the external environment who interact on a regular basis with the academic-support unit. These external constituents frequently are the source of constraints on the focal unit. Their rules and regulations, whether formal or implicit, can hamper the effectiveness of an operation. It is important to include representatives of these constituencies for two reasons: (1) to obtain their perspectives on the operative goals and processes of the unit, and (2) to make them aware of the extent to which their rules act as constraints and inhibit the effectiveness of the unit.

"External environment" in this context has two meanings. It includes departments outside of the focal unit, but inside the university. As an example, if the registration office were being evaluated it would be important to consider the perspective of the administrative computer center which

provides the data-processing support for the registrations office. Individuals and/or organizations outside of the university are also part of the external environment. For some departments, such as purchasing, this includes suppliers and contractors with whom the university does business. While campus users of the purchasing department expect the department to provide prompt service and quality products at the lowest possible price, suppliers and contractors want to make the best "deal" and be paid promptly. Resolving these two possibly conflicting goals could be problematic, although enlightening, for the self-study committee.

It should be reiterated here that it is practical for representatives of only a few constituencies to sit on the self-study committee. The political decision concerning who the "most important" constituents are must be made by the senior administrator and the director. The self-study committee itself might later decide to add one or more constituents. Nonrepresented constituencies and/or all of the members of the constituencies that are represented can be surveyed using paper surveys, phone surveys, focus groups, personal interviews, or group forums to assure all perspectives are considered.

Domains of activity to be considered. The inclusion of the perspectives of all constituencies leads to the evaluation of activity in all of the domains in which the unit operates. Domains arise from the activities or primary tasks that are emphasized in the organization, from the competencies of the organization, and from the demands placed upon the organization by external forces (Cameron, 1981; Miles, 1980). [The Office of Institutional Studies, an academic-support unit, can serve to illustrate this point. The traditional responsibility of the institutional research office has been the collection and reporting of institutional data to Federal and State agencies as well as to senior administrators. Analytical studies in support of

decision making have also been the responsibility of this office. These activities represent two domains of activity. When Federal regulations and court rulings required that an affirmative action plan be prepared, this office was seen by the administration as the office where the expertise resided for preparing such a document. The "competencies of the organization" as well as "external demands" thus created another domain of activity for the office.]

Cameron and Whetten (1983) point out that "no organization is maximally effective in all its domains" (p. 271). Nevertheless, the self-study committee must examine the effectiveness of the unit in all of the areas in which the unit operates. Senior administrators, however, must not expect an equal level of performance in all domains. The evaluation might be useful in assisting the unit director and senior administrator to set priorities concerning domains of activity so the highest levels of performance can be achieved in those areas deemed most important to the campus at any given point in time.

As the self-study committee considers the domains in which the unit operates, it should consider the structure or organization of the unit. Are routine functions centralized and automated to the extent possible? Are functions requiring creativity decentralized to allow staff the freedom they need to perform effectively? Are job responsibilities distributed in the most efficient manner. Is the unit, within each domain, employing the appropriate technology, i.e., knowledge and machines? Is there evidence of creativity and innovation? Are new ideas and methods tested and adopted if they work? Is there evidence of a willingness on the part of staff as well as supervisors to adapt and change as the requirements of the environment change? Such attributes of unit performance must be considered in judging effectiveness (Hage, 1980).

One domain should exist in every unit and it deserves close scrutiny by the committee. This activity is the acquisition and utilization of resources for the purpose of obtaining additional resources. Does the unit attract, and utilize, bright, competent, dedicated employees? The reputation of a unit for having a high degree of competency brings respect and helps to attract additional able employees. The unit should also use the skills and competencies of its employees to get the most from its human energy. The acquisition and effective use of information can lead to innovation.

Another resource that isn't often recognized is the goodwill of the units' users. Garnering goodwill can lead to improved effectiveness through cooperation and even to additional funding.

The committee should also consider whether the unit should be operating in all the domains that it does. In view of the limited resources with which units in higher education must operate, it's possible that the unit is continuing to engage in activities that are of limited value to the institution. Effectiveness in more important domains is likely to be improved if activity in one or more other domains is eliminated. A unit director might hesitate to make such a recommendation on his/her own initiative, but with the support of the self-study committee would find it more comfortable to take the step. It is also quite possible that the unit director never considered reducing services by limiting the unit's activities. Sometimes an outside perspective is required to see the obvious. The decision to deny a constituency an established service is not an easy one, but it is an appropriate recommendation resulting from this evaluation process.

Time frame. The concept of self study requires that the time frame considered in the evaluation is current. What's going on now and what results are being achieved? The committee might consider plans for change that are in the process of being implemented and comment on the expected results. The

committee's report might also recommend changes that should be considered for the future.

Type of data utilized. There are two kinds of data that can be used in an evaluation--objective and subjective. Objective data are obtained from organizational records. Some examples appropriate to unit review are budget data, staff turnover rates, number of units processed (i.e., applications, student-aid requests, purchase orders, work requests), personnel evaluations, absentee rate, to name some of the obvious. Subjective data are perceptual and are obtained from surveys or personal interviews. Cameron (1980) cautions that objective and subjective data are sometimes contradictory. Nevertheless, both kinds of data can contribute to the study of effectiveness.

Budget level over time suggest whether a unit is being properly funded as its domains of activity expand or shrink and the number of units processed changes. Turnover rates can indicate the level of staff morale. (Caution should be exercised to also consider salary levels when looking at turnover. Poorly paid employees might be highly motivated but still require more money, so they leave.) Changes in units produced per employee can indicate the appropriateness of staffing levels. These are a few examples of ways in which organizational (objective) data can be used in the evaluation process.

Perceptual (subjective) data also play a role in evaluation. The importance of examining the perspectives of all the identifiable constituents of the unit has already been discussed. These are perceptual data. When considering subjective data, the committee must recognize that by their nature such data are biased. It is possible that lack of information or even dishonesty on the part of respondents can hinder the reliability of the data. It should also be noted that the nature and timeframe of the self study does not permit the testing of survey instruments for reliability and validity. The instruments used will be designed by the committee or its designee and are

likely to be used only once during the review process. (As the institutional process becomes established, it will be useful to develop specialized instruments or identify standard instruments that can be used routinely in every review. For instance, a survey to assess staff morale and attitudes that was applicable to all departments could be developed and tested. Use of such a survey, and any others that might be determined to be appropriate, would contribute to the consistency of the evaluations across departments.)

Referents. Referents are the standards against which the effectiveness of the academic-support unit will be judged.

The UMCP framework will include the use of several referents. Since this evaluation process examines the perspectives or goals of the unit's several constituencies, use of the goal-centered approach is suitable. How well is the unit achieving the goals of the various constituents? As was the case in the discussion of domains, differential levels of goal achievement among constituents is to be expected. Again, the unit director and senior administrator must set priorities.

It is appropriate to compare the unit with similar units. Two sources of referents are applicable. First, if industry or government standards of performance are available for the type of activity conducted by the unit, they can be used to measure effectiveness. Such might be the case for personnel (number of job applicants processed per employee), purchasing (number of purchase orders filled per employee), or accounts payable (number of invoices processed per employee). Many units have no counterpart outside of higher education. Comparable data for these units (registration, admissions, bursar, and student affairs units, to name a few) must be obtained from peer institutions. In selecting peers for comparison, care must be taken that only comparable institutions are selected. The admissions process at Harvard is probably quite different from the process at Penn State. Using Harvard's data

as a measure of effectiveness at Penn State would be inappropriate. The instrument for collecting peer data must be very carefully designed to assure the clarity of the request. The director of the unit can offer the best advice on the development of such an instrument, whether the data are collected using a paper survey, by phone, or even in person.

Another form of comparative evaluation will occur when outside experts visit the campus and evaluate the unit. These experts will each have their own set of referents against which the unit will be judged.

Steps to Follow in Conducting an Academic-Support Unit Review

When an academic support unit is being reviewed the following activities should occur.

1. Senior administrator and unit director form self-study committee and consider appropriate external reviewers.
2. Committee, senior administrator, and unit director discuss particular issues to be addressed in the review.
3. Committee prepares self-study plan and budget and submits it to the senior administrator.
4. Senior administrator approves plan and budget or makes suggestions for changes.
5. Committee conducts self study addressing the following general issues and using the UMCP framework as a guide:
    a. Expectations of the various constituencies
    b. Domains in which unit is operating
    c. Structure, task differentiation and technology of the unit relevant to the expressed goals of the constituencies
    d. Conformance with performance standards
    e. Constraints imposed by the external environment (includes

funding and staffing levels)

f. Satisfaction of users with the unit's services

g. Qualifications/competencies and morale of the staff

h. General environment of the workplace

i. Recommendations

6. Committee prepares self-study report.
7. Committee submits self-study to senior administrator and external reviewers.
8. External reviewers conduct on-site evaluation.
9. External reviewers submit evaluation report.
10. External review results are incorporated into self-study report.
11. Director prepares response and plan to implement recommendations.
12. Senior administrator and unit director discuss report, director's response, and plans to implement report's recommendations.
13. Report and action plans are submitted to the Chief Executive Officer.

Shortcomings of the Framework

Even though it draws from a variety of models of organizational effectiveness, the UMCP framework has several shortcomings.

1. There is no explicit evaluation of efficiency in the framework. Hannan and Freeman (1977) include efficiency in their definition of effectiveness since resource constraints exist within most organizations. Evaluators could calculate a cost-per-output ratio and compare it with similar ratios from other peer institutions. The problem that frequently confounds such a comparison is the likelihood that no units in higher education institutions are exactly alike. While different structures and/or technology should not prevent comparison of efficiency ratios, differing domains of activity should. If one admissions office evaluates the transcripts of

transfer applicants for applicability of credits toward a specific major and a comparison admissions office does not, their efficiency ratios are not comparable. Usually the self-study committee wouldn't be aware of such subtleties. Because such efficiency comparisons are problematic they have not been included in the framework.

2. Evaluations won't be identical in all units. The framework sets general guidelines, but a self study is subjective. Different committees will emphasize different areas for scrutiny. The senior administrator and unit director will suggest different issues for concentrated study. Some committees will have a stronger commitment to the process than others. There is probably no way to avoid such differences completely. The senior administrator has some control since he/she will approve the committee's plan. However, as long as the senior administrator and unit director receive the information they require from the evaluation, one need not be overly concerned with consistency as long as the basic framework is applied.

3. Unit evaluations over time aren't likely to be consistent for the same reasons evaluations among units might not be consistent. Ideally, in subsequent evaluations, the report from the prior evaluation would be considered and the committee would note if the recommendations had been implemented. It's possible that from one review to another constituencies and domains would change, Of necessity, the review would be somewhat different. Lack of consistency over time is not a serious problem.

4. Negativism concerning the evaluation can be a problem, especially for the first units to be reviewed. Unit directors as well as staff might be threatened by such close scrutiny of their unit. It is incumbent on senior administrators to allay such fears by describing the process beforehand and pointing out the positive aspects of the self study. It was previously mentioned that involving the director and subunit managers and staff in the

evaluation process will also serve to place the process in a more positive light.

5. The UMCP framework describes a multistage process which is expensive to implement. It is estimated that each self study will take close to a year from planning to final report. A significant portion of the time of the unit director and the several staff who serve on the committee will be required for the self study. It isn't likely that any additional people will be hired to assist with the normal workload. In addition, other university employees will be asked to serve on self-study committees as representatives of various constituencies. Employees will provide their services to the self-study committee by either slacking off on other responsibilities or, more likely, by spending more time on the job. Either way, the service exacts a price.

Other costs are also involved in the conduct of surveys and the preparation of committee working materials. The most significant financial outlay will be required to bring to campus experts for every evaluation. It is estimated that as many as ten reviews can occur in any given year on campus. The collective cost of conducting so many evaluations has not been estimated, but it is not insignificant.

Benefits of Review

Such an expensive process should provide some tangible benefits. What will the university gain from such a process? Probably the most obvious and desired benefit of unit evaluation is the diagnosis of problem areas and the resulting improvement in operations and decisions. Of equal importance, however, is the opportunity to discover and acknowledge excellence in an operation. In fact, evaluation is likely to be viewed more positively by those being assessed if this possible outcome of review is emphasized.

Brewer (1983) points out that another benefit of unit evaluation is complacency reduction. In the course of working with the self-study committee, unit personnel, and particularly the unit director, must clarify their own goals. Such introspection leads to clarity about what has to be done and the best way to do it. The unit-review process provides an opportunity for unit personnel to step back from the pressure of routine demands and think about what they're doing and how they're doing it.

The UMCP framework draws representatives of identifiable constituencies into the evaluation process. As the goals of the several constituencies are discussed, there is an opportunity for each constituent to recognize the goals of the others. Constituents will also be in a position of seeing the constraints they, and the others, place on the focal unit. A better understanding of all of the demands placed on a department coupled with the knowledge of budget and staff limitations should serve to make constituents less critical when their own expectations are not met.

Finally, the evaluation activity itself could enhance the image of the university. This outcome of assessment is also mentioned by Brewer (1983). Such activity is commonplace in industry, and introducing the practice should send a signal to those who provide funding, both public and private, that the university is committed to achieving the highest level of effectiveness and quality in its operations. By developing an evaluation system on its own initiative the university might forestall any effort on the part of state agencies to mandate such practices. While the process of assessing the effectiveness of academic-support units may be difficult, time consuming, and expensive, there are many benefits to be gained from such a practice.

Implementation of the Process

On February 11, 1987 Chancellor John B. Slaughter instructed the vice chancellors to establish a calendar and begin the review of academic-support units. As might be expected, the Guidelines have been implemented with varying levels of enthusiasm.

Three of four vice chancellors initiated reviews. The Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement intends to review his entire area simultaneously at a later date. In one vice chancellor's division, two units are conducting self studies but have not included any constituents on the Self-Study Committee. Clearly, these units did not follow the prescribed Guidelines.

A second vice chancellor has just initiated his first review. The Self-Study Committee includes a wide range of the unit's constituents and everyone on the committee appears to be dedicated to doing a thorough review. Although it has taken months to get this review started, the vice chancellor appears to have some commitment to the process. It should be noted that this Vice Chancellor did not share the Chancellor's Guidelines with the Self-Study Committee. The questions that are to be addressed in the course of the review were not made available. As a result, the Committee will address only those issues it believes are important.

The third vice chancellor is deeply committed to the process. One review in his division is already complete and two more are nearing completion. This division has a committee whose purpose is to oversee the review process across the division and help assure consistency in the process.

Since I've been involved in the reviews in the Administrative Affairs Division, I can speak a little more authoritatively about these reviews. The Guidelines were carefully followed in these reviews. In all three cases, the Assistant Vice Chancellor responsible for the unit to be reviewed acted as

Chair of the Self-Study Steering Committee. This assured a direct line of authority between the Vice Chancellor and the Committee. The Vice Chancellor requested time tables, letting it be known that he expected the plan to be followed. He discussed the composition of the Steering Committee with the Assistant Vice Chancellor and the Director of the Unit. He also indicated possible problem areas that he wanted the Committees to investigate.

The Steering Committees for all three reviews appointed "Internal" and "External" subcommittees comprised of Steering Committee members as well as other members of the campus community, usually staff of the department being reviewed. The Internal Subcommittee addressed issues related to the operation of the unit, i.e., unit organization, plans and resources, staff morale, and performance. The External Subcommittee evaluated the unit in relation to its external environment. This subcommittee analyzed user satisfaction and compared the unit with similar operations at peer institutions. The questions addressed by these subcommittees, and ultimately the Steering Committee, are presented in Attachment 1 to the Guidelines. (Most of these questions originated at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.) The report of the Steering Committees will ultimately result from the reports of these two subcommittees, along with the reports of the external evaluators.

Results of Reviews

What, in general, did the self studies discover that wasn't already known? Not an awful lot, but then it's still early. The reviews aren't really complete. Directors of the units whose reviews were just about complete shared some of their thoughts about the process and its results.

The process itself takes a significant share of the unit's resources. There doesn't seem to be a good time to fit the review into the day-to-day workload. The directors didn't learn anything significant that they didn't

already know. The results of the reviews confirmed and highlighted the problems they knew existed. The review teams did offer some solutions; however, only time will tell if the recommendations will be implemented. The important point is that dedicated people from many areas of the campus have invested a significant amount of time, thought, and effort in these reviews. It will be difficult for the administration to ignore their recommendations when it was the administration that instituted the process.

Role of Institutional Research

What role does the IR office play in this process? At College Park, the Director of Institutional Studies has been involved in developing the Guidelines and compiling and monitoring the campus schedule. The Director is also responsible for coordinating the process in the Academic Affairs Division, and will serve on every Self-Study Committee in that division.

More generally, review of the questions in Attachment 1 to the Guidelines will reveal several areas of involvement for IR. First, the IR Office is called upon to provide the data basic to the review--items such as number of employees by EEO classification, length of employment, turnover rates, and budget levels, usually all for five years.

Secondly, the IR office was asked to assist in collecting peer data. We also offered advise on the kinds of data it is reasonable to collect from peers.

The IR office at UMCP assisted in conducting user surveys, all of which so far have been paper surveys. Units required assistance in formulating questions, conducting the surveys, and analyzing results. The initiation of this review process at College Park has had a serious impact on the IR staff. During the next round of reviews we'll be able to draw on some of the instruments we've developed for use in other units. Ideally, we'll finalize a

standard survey for employees of any unit to determine morale and attitudes toward the workplace. User surveys will also be adaptable to some extent. Like the campus, the Institutional Studies Office needs a little more experience with the process.

Conclusion

What has the campus learned about the process so far? Since only one review has actually been completed, the final paragraphs can't be written. We do know the Guidelines aren't being followed by all units. The Chancellor will have to reinforce their importance or decide that each Committee has freedom to develop its own study. The list of questions is too long and responses don't fit neatly into a report. Rather than require that the questions be answered, the Guidelines should suggest that the Committees investigate all of the areas suggested by the questions. Since a review requires a significant amount of the time of Self-Study Committee members, care should be taken to assure that faculty and staff aren't asked to serve on committees more than once every three or four years. On the other hand, service on a review committee is a learning experience and every effort should be made to include a wide variety of faculty and staff.

It's a little premature to make a judgment about the value of the process. It will be another year or so until the process can be evaluated. It will take even longer to see if recommendations are implemented. The ultimate test will be in the improvement of service to the campus community. If the quality of academic support improves, the time, effort, and resources expended on the review process will be considered well spent.

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Appendix A

Guiding Principles for the Review of Academic-Support Units

1. The process and guidelines developed for the review should serve all academic-support units and measure unit effectiveness. The should be generic in nature and set forth the basic issues to be addressed in the review.

2. The process should be perceived by the units reviewed as a positive and supportive one. It should provide them with an opportunity to step back and examine their operations objectively and comprehensively. Data collection should be kept to a minimum. It should also provide useful management information to unit heads and executives to whom the units report.

3. The process should be decentralized and focused in the vice chancellor's office. The committee anticipates that each vice chancellor will implement the process defined in this paper and follow the guidelines outlined. Each vice chancellor can supplement the guidelines with additional instructions, as appropriate. The vice chancellors will be expected to develop a calendar for the review of the units reporting to them. In addition, a report on division academic-support unit review activities will be submitted by each vice chancellor annually to the Chancellor.

4. Unit reviews should include a unit self study based on the questions in the appendix, a survey of user perceptions of services provided, and a review by experts external to the Campus.

5. Each review process should begin with a clear statement of unit goals and objectives that have been approved by the unit's Vice Chancellor. Such a statement is essential to fair and effective reviews.

6. It should clearly be understood that a satisfactory review process will require resources. The committee believes, however, that a decentralized process can minimize costs.

7. Realistic expectations must be established for the process. It should be clear to units undergoing review that the new resources available to current problems identified will be quite limited.

8. Interrelationships with other units should be analyzed in the review. Clearly when a user perspective is taken, effective relationships with other units are essential to reducing unit compartmentalization and needless effort on the part of user.

Attachment 1

Evaluation Questions for Academic-Support Unit Reviews

Section A: Unit Organization, Plans, and Resources

1. What are the goals and objectives of the unit as perceived by the unit head and the unit staff?

2. What priorities have been assigned to these objectives?

3. What is the organization of the unit, including line relationships? Is this structure adequate for the achievement of the current mission of the unit?

4. Are the internal structures of the unit appropriate to its objectives and work plan?

5. Does the unit have a procedure for evaluating its operation on a periodic basis? What's the nature of this procedure? How are the results of this procedure used?

6. Are the personnel and budgetary resources allocated to the unit adequate and commensurate with the mission assigned to it?

7. Do appropriate members of the staff participate in the formulation of budgets and decisions relating to expenditures of resources?

8. Is the space allocated to the unit adequate for its operations and appropriate to its role on campus?

9. Does the unit use the technologies that might be useful in improving its efficiency and overall performance?

Section B: Staffing

1. Are the personnel within the unit familiar with unit objectives and the importance of their work in achieving the stated objectives?

2. Is there effective communication among members of the staff?

3. To what extent is the quality of life for members of the unit addressed by the unit's manager and can improvements be made in this area?

4. What programs are available for staff training and development and how active is the unit in fostering participation in such programs?

5. Is the unit adequately responding to affirmative action and equal opportunity goals of the campus?

6. Do managers and staff maintain an adequate level of professional competence through participation in appropriate professional organizations, institutional training programs or other departmental activities?

Section C: Performance

1. Indicate the performance measures that have been established for the unit. What actions are taken when these measures indicate that a significant change in performance has accurred?

2. How does the unit evaluate the operational effectiveness and the quality of service to users?

3. Is the unit fulfilling its responsibilities with respect to external agencies?

4. Have significant findings of federal, state, and internal audits or management reviews been given satisfactory attention by the unit?

5. Have adequate internal controls been established for such activities as purchasing, equipment maintenance, and payroll procedures?

6. Are internal and external forms and reports reviewed on a regular basis to determine their need, relevance, and cost?

7. Are new methods, procedures, technologies and equipment regularly studied in order to improve the effectiveness of operations?

8. What are the key problems facing the unit and what could be done to solve them?

9. Are internal and external support units providing adequate assistance to the unit?

10. How do external (i.e., UMCA, State) constraints impact on the performance of the unit?

Section D: Campus Role

1. Is the unit appropriately placed within the institution. Is it afforded appropriate status?

2. Is the administration sufficiently responsive to the needs of the unit?

3. What responsibilities of the unit must be closely coordinated with other units on Campus and how are these responsibilities allocated and coordinated?

Section E: User Satisfaction

1. What do users perceive the function and goals of the unit to be?

2. Are users asked regularly to appraise the effectiveness of the unit's operations and services? What are the results of these evaluations? Are users' recommendations considered for implementation?

3. Are users' expectations of the unit's performance in agreement with the unit's appraisal?

4. What changes and improvements have been suggested by users?

5. Is there a manual of instructions explaining how to use the unit's services? Have users been asked to evaluate the usefulness of the manual?

6. Are there training programs for users of the unit's services? Have users been asked to evaluate the usefulness of the training programs?

Section F: Other Relevant Background Data

1. Organizational Chart

2. Charge statement of the responsibilities of the unit

3. Current budget

4. Flow chart of major operations or systems

5. Financial reports including summary expenditure reports in relation to original and revised budget allocations

6. Workload data, measurements, and performance indicators used for major activities

7. Data on personnel actions for the past year; for example, data on turnover, new positions, merit raises, performance evaluations, promotions, and recruitments

8. Significant internal and external policies pertaining to the functional area

Section G: Function/Process Evaluation: Role of Participants External to the Focal Unit

1. Do personnel who participate in the process under review, but who are not employed in the focal unit perceive themselves to be part of the process? Are they aware of their role in the process? Are they aware of the goals of the process?

2. Is there effective communication between staff of the focal unit and outside participants in the process?

3. Are the responsibilities of process participants outside the focal unit clearly documented?

4. Are process participants outside of the focal unit aware of any external regulations which guide (control) the process?

5. Is feedback provided to process participants on their contributions toward the accomplishment of the goals of the process?